

## **2022-02-02: RCMP Briefing Notes for Premier Kenney for Trucker Convoy Blockade**

### **Background:**

- On January 29, 2022, a convoy of semi trucks and passenger vehicles travelled to the Coutts border (via Highway 4) to protest COVID-19 mandates (including but not limited to, the cross-border vaccination health orders applicable to truck drivers transporting goods).
- We estimated that approximately 1000 vehicles stretched over 46 km of roadway made up the convoy.
- The size of this convoy caused us concern from the outset, as we recognized that we had limited lawful authority to stop the protest before any offences were committed.
- This was held in conjunction with 9 other protest events spread across the province, as well as RCMP assisting Edmonton Police Service with multiple convoys coming into the city from numerous directions.
- All of the protests (aside from Coutts) ended without incident.
- RCMP engaged early with the protest organizers, and it was made clear to them that we would not tolerate road blockages and any unlawful activity, and any activity to the contrary would have serious consequences. Recognizing that we were willing to tolerate some traffic slow-downs, at no time were they given permission to block the roadways completely.
- We had to rely from the relationship that was built with the organizers, and original assurances were obtained from the organizers that they planned to circle the area but maintain one lane of traffic open, and no blockades would be created.
- A splinter group broke off and created a complete blockage of both highway lanes.
- We recognized that there were people with vehicles caught up in the blockade that wanted to leave but were unable to, and this would lead to issues of them running short of food, fuel, etc. This included approximately 30 semi trucks that had cleared customs and were trapped in the border clearance parking lot.
- Bringing in additional resources to the area involves consideration for the time it takes to travel to the area from elsewhere in the province.

### **Objectives:**

- 1) Have traffic moving through the border and maintain an open passage for traffic in the area.
- 2) Ensure that no additional protestors attend or reinforce the current blockade.

3) Ensure a proper investigational team is in place to gather information / evidence for successful prosecutions.

#### **UPDATE : History / Chronology:**

Tuesday (afternoon)

- Other groups arrived to reinforce the protestors, and these consist of passenger vehicles, farm equipment, and additional semi trucks.
- Enforcement action began, but was paused due to police safety issues as some of the checkpoints were overtaken by groups of additional protestors and required redeploying the officers to provide backup.
- At a specific checkpoint on Highway 4 and 501, the crowd of reinforcing protestors was hostile and threatening toward the officers, and surrounded them.
- The protestors pushed through the barricades and caused at least 1 collision with an uninvolved motorist, which resulted in a physical altercation between the motorist and protestor. This required intervention by officers, however, no officers were injured during this event.
- Vehicles (tractors and smaller trucks) have broken through the perimeter and driven through the ditches and fields to avoid barricaded checkpoints, which greatly increases the risk to officer safety.
- An additional 3 blockades were created by protestors as a result of police actions, which were taken down by the end of the day.
- One group of protestors at a secondary location remains on Highway 500 at highway 4, comprised of a group of approximately 100 vehicles. This is creating restrictions to emergency access.
- Threatening behaviour toward the Coutts mayor has been addressed by CCMG.
- The largest challenges remain the lack of access to towing support and the geographical challenge of maintaining a secure and safe perimeter.
- Companies in Alberta, BC and Saskatchewan that have the capability to tow and move semi trucks are being approached, however, all are unwilling to assist based on the amount of backlash (phone calls, emails and social media) they have been receiving and don't want to get involved due to a detriment to their business.
- Investigators continue to try and deescalate the situation through voluntary compliance.
- RCMP extra resources are being put in place for extended operations.
- Other agencies such as Lethbridge Regional Police and Calgary Police Public Order Units have been engaged to support the RCMP as required.
- A number of Go Fund Me accounts and pages have been set up to support the protestors, and this is providing funding for their activities and costs of remaining in the area.

- Legal considerations are being taken into account due to possible shortages of judges and information for prosecutions.
- Areas to secure the towed vehicles and security for tow companies continue to be planned for.

### Wednesday

- Overnight and into the morning, the attitude of the protest group has changed and become more aggressive and hostile
- Activities have become more aggressive, including tractors and vehicles driving right up to police vehicles at checkpoints as if they are going to ram them, then backing off
- Approx 10% of the protestors seem to be moderately inclined to want to leave if given the opportunity, the remaining are “all in” and have nothing left to lose.
- Divisions within the protestors continue to occur, with anyone agreeing with police being shouted down and unable to express their opinion if it differs from the majority.
- A distinct leader has not yet been identified, any engagement that officers have results in being approached by around 10 people with demands.
- Latest demand is to have fuel and support trucks come to assist the protestors, as some trucks are breaking down due to inactivity and weather. However, there is NO willingness to reciprocate by the protestors by giving anything up from their side.
- Plans for today involve evidence gathering for prosecutions, as well as ongoing communications and reinforcing police barricades. Continued enforcement as necessary and depending on equipment availability.
- Ongoing attempts are being made to secure tow and vehicle removal equipment.
- We are still exploring options with CBSA to use US tow companies.
- The town's people are unable to use the main highway and are having to use a service road through a field to enter the town of Coutts.
- NUMBERS: - since beginning, approx. 65 semi trucks have left, unknown how many passenger vehicles, and tractors because some leave and show up again the next day
- Approx. 100 semi trucks remain at the site of the original blockade (Hwy 4 at Coutts)
- Approx. 70 semi trucks at secondary protest on Highway 501 and 4
- Alberta Towing Recovery Association has been engaged and have sent members to the site to determine exactly what towing assistance they can offer
- We are monitoring some temporary additional protests that are slowing traffic in the area but so far, not blocking it.

### Complexity / Challenges:

- The large number of vehicles involved and the size of the vehicles involved present major challenges for access and removal.

- Location of the blockade: lack of major roadways in the area, especially those accessible to semi trucks, makes it difficult to identify alternate access and exit routes.
- The large, open rural area makes it difficult to establish secure access points and a containment perimeter, due to the size of the area, multiple access points, and protest supporters' ability to bypass roadways and travel through farmlands. This creates safety concerns for police and support personnel involved, as this creates an opportunity for protest sympathizers to surround the police and create harm.
- Information being put out through social media and through discussions with protestors has involved mention of violence and firearms involvement, which presents a high risk to police and public safety.
- If warranted, mass arrests will be needed to deal with the number of protestors. When these occur, there are many additional challenges that arise, including but not limited to: resourcing for arrest execution; prisoner processing and holding; and proceeding to court with charges.
- Engaging local businesses, such as tow companies for vehicle removal, is proving difficult as local businesses do not want to be perceived as taking one side (either the police's side or the protestors' side). This is further complicated by the fact that this is a small rural area, where many people are known to each other.
- Numerous resources are required to deal with these types of events, and these are pulled from across the province, which creates strain on the organization while it maintains its policing obligations to the entire province, as well as dealing with the resource shortages impacted by the pandemic.
- There are a number of agencies involved, including the USA, and coordination of solutions between multiple agencies is complex. The lack of CBSA engagement at the beginning of the event made it difficult to establish options and strategies.
- Lack of appropriate equipment is a major hurdle, resourcing is sufficient
- We have support from other police agencies, including CPS, LRPS, Sheriffs/CVE, and CBSA and s.38

Prepared by:

Approved by: